

Written Testimony of Lisa P. Sementilli, Deputy Director

RE: H.B. No. 5014, AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING June 30, 2012

**Before the Appropriations Committee
February 17, 2012**

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Governor's proposals. On behalf of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, thank you for your leadership in preventing and ending homelessness in Connecticut. *We oppose the proposed cut of \$150,000 for the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) pilot and the \$9 million cut to cash assistance (TANF) from the Department of Social Services' budget.*

While there are many contributing factors to homelessness, primary among these are inadequate income, unemployment and the high cost of housing. Numerous studies have found that homeless families typically have incomes under fifty percent of the poverty level.¹ *For a family of three, this equates to an income under \$9,200 per year.*

- More than 13,000 individuals used Connecticut emergency and transitional housing programs last year. And *an estimated 40,000 families are "doubled up" (staying with family or friend for economic reasons) in Connecticut.*
- Only a third of female single parents in Connecticut's emergency shelters reported receiving TANF. Among Hispanic/Latino emergency shelter users, over half (52%; n=403) reported having 'No Financial Resources,' whereas 45% (n=1382) non-Hispanic/Latino respondents reported a complete lack of income. (CT PIT 2010)

Raiding programs for our lowest income residents to fund other programs is a Connecticut legacy that we can stop with this budget. Elsewhere in the budget, the Governor's proposals acknowledge the inextricable link between housing and economic security. Providing opportunities for parents to earn enough to be self-sufficient reduces the need for on-going state funded subsidies. We need both subsidies AND income supports for the lowest income families.

If we are able to cut TANF due to case load changes, we have a responsibility to reinvest those dollars to fund and even expand the JFES pilot and other programs to provide economic opportunity. We suggest the following ways to redirect the \$9 million:

- Fund and expand the JFES pilot;
- Extend cash assistance time limits to allow parents to complete job training and education programs;

- Increase investments in the youth employment program to help to build a workforce pipeline, and preventing housing crises and homelessness among youth, a growing sector;
- Build employability of low-skill adults through paid work experience combined with education, training, transportation and child care assistance.

As noted in previous testimony, we are also urging the committee to consider additional resources for rental assistance and child care for families in shelter who are looking for housing and work. Thank you.

¹ National Alliance to End Homelessness, "2010 Policy Guide" Washington, DC: July 2010.